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A MACAT ANALYSIS

THEODORE LEVITT'S
**MARKETING
MYOPIA**





An Analysis of

Theodore Levitt's --- Marketing Myopia

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With
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PROBLEM-SOLVING – producing strong solutions

REASONING – creating strong arguments

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CRITICAL THINKING AND “MARKETING MYOPIA”

Primary critical thinking skill: PROBLEM SOLVING

Secondary critical thinking skill: CREATIVE THINKING

Theodore Levitt's 1960 article “Marketing Myopia” is a business classic that earned its author the nickname “the father of modern marketing”. It is also a beautiful demonstration of the problem solving skills that are crucial in so many areas of life – in business and beyond.

The problem facing Levitt was the same problem that has confronted business after business for hundreds of years: how best to deal with slowing growth and eventual decline. Levitt studied many business empires – the railroads, for instance – that at a certain point simply shrivelled up and shrank to almost nothing. How, he asked, could businesses avoid such failures?

His approach and his solution comprise a concise demonstration of high-level problem solving at its best. Good problem solvers first identify what the problem is, then isolate the best methodology for solving it. And, as Levitt showed, a dose of creative thinking also helps. Levitt's insight was that falling sales are all about marketing, and marketing is about knowing your real business. The railroads misunderstood their real market: they weren't selling rail, they were selling transport. If they had understood that, they could have successfully taken advantage of new growth areas – truck haulage, for instance – rather than futilely scrabbling to sell rail to a saturated market.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE ORIGINAL WORK

Born in Germany in 1925, **Theodore Levitt** and his family relocated to Dayton, Ohio, in the United States when he was 10. He received his doctorate in economics from Ohio State University and began his teaching career at the University of North Dakota. Levitt then joined the Harvard Business School in 1959 and taught there until he retired in 1990. He also worked as a consultant to businesses, especially in the oil industry. He and his wife of 58 years had four children. Dubbed “the father of modern marketing,” Levitt died in 2006.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS OF THE ANALYSIS

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ABOUT MACAT

GREAT WORKS FOR CRITICAL THINKING

Macat is focused on making the ideas of the world’s great thinkers accessible and comprehensible to everybody, everywhere, in ways that promote the development of enhanced critical thinking skills.

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former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge

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Professor William Tronzo, University of California at San Diego



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WAYS IN TO THE TEXT

KEY POINTS

- The business scholar Theodore Levitt was born in Germany in 1925 and moved to the United States when he was 10 years old.
- His 1960 article “Marketing Myopia” made him famous as “the father of modern marketing.”
- Levitt analyzed why businesses suffer from slowed or zero growth; for him, it is important that any business should put the customer first.

Who Was Theodore Levitt?

Theodore Levitt, the author of the article “Marketing Myopia” (1960), was born in Germany in 1925. When he was 10 years old, his family relocated to the United States, settling in Dayton, Ohio. He interrupted his high school education to fight in World War II* for the Americans in Europe. After the war, he finished high school through a correspondence course and worked as a sportswriter for a newspaper in his hometown in Ohio.

Eventually, Levitt obtained a doctorate in economics at Ohio State University and began his academic career as an assistant professor at the University of North Dakota. His early writings attracted the attention of both business—mostly leaders of oil companies—and academia. In 1959 the prestigious Harvard Business School at Harvard